

News-letter - August 1950

No 3

Editorial"S.W.L. Reports"

Generally speaking the short-wave listener is a now-comer to the amateur radio fraternity. He is keen and enthusiastic and has not developed that superiority complex which seems to overtake many old-timers. The transmitter should, and usually does, take an interest in the activities of his fellow SWL's, and should also lend a helping hand wherever possible.

Complaints are often made by listeners that they never receive a reply from many amateurs, even though they may have enclosed a reply coupon with their report or card. Admittedly, if a station receives as many as 30--100 SWL reports in a week, then he is apt to dismiss the SWL as a menace, and finds it impossible to reply to any of them.

The whole problem revolves around the question of the usefulness or otherwise of the report received. Reporting certainly encourages the beginner, and it is felt that if possible, the amateur should always reply to the SWL reports he receives. On the other hand, he may not feel inclined to encourage the type who has not the sense to realise that his reports are of no value.

It would seem that a great step to better understanding between the amateur and SWL could be taken by the amateur being a bit more tolerant, and the SWL using more intelligence, and not reporting an S9 signal from Bolton on 7m.c/s. which is a sheer waste of time.

What transmitters do want to know is their signal strength at long-distance, and if possible on 1-7, 3-5, or 7 mc/s.* The VK or ZL who is RST 349 in this country would probably like to hear about it, but not if he is 589. Reports should be sent only for the stations who have difficulty in getting out, and never to a station already in contact with this country. Go in for listening on the lower frequency bands where your observations will be appreciated, and make your reports as comprehensive as possible, covering a period of say five separate transmissions.

To the transmitter we would say, before despatching the SWL reports to the W.P.B., try to remember how, when you were a SWL, it thrilled you to sort out the first batch of cards from the bureau.

"DX-ing"

Last month the meaning of DX was explained, and now, it is hoped, you will learn something about DX reception.

Let us take the "two DX bands", as they are popularly called, 14 and 28 mc. On both these bands you will find a tendency for amateurs from the same country or of the same tongue to group around certain frequencies in the phone section. The Spanish speaking stations are usually to be found at the H.F. end of the 14mc. band, the W's in the centre of the band, and there is often a crowd of VK's around 14200kc. working schedules.

On 28mc., the occupancy is spread out more. As this band presents erratic conditions it is not proposed to probe deeply into conditions. The band should be back in its old form by 1954 as a matter of interest! Let it suffice to say that on this band, it is usual to receive countries which are not normally heard on any other band. Many central Americans and stations on lonely Pacific islands are only to be heard on 28mc. Low ionosphere absorption on these frequencies makes the band most suitable for low power 'phone work and so it is easy at most times, during normal conditions, to hear these so-called DX stations. The main advantage of "ten" is that there is little short skip, which causes the well-known QRM on 20m!

On 14 mc., however, it is more of a fight to receive and work DX, as you have the aforesaid short skip and QRM. Indeed, you may on any "busy" night, notice that there are three distinct layers of stations.

1. The layer of S9-plus signals from 11, DL4, UA, UB5, and W-- kilowatts.

2. The S6 layer from S. America, Asia, and ground-wave G's.

3. The S3 layer, the most precious of them all, where rare, low-power (?) stations abound. In this layer you may catch ones like VQ8AX on Mauritius Is., or FP8AC on St. Pierre Is. where there is a break in the top layers!

/over

The listener must of course respect the DX hours. It is useless to listen for DX when conditions are obviously not favourable. Now, on 14mc., Asiatic stations (Ref.ells hrd) may be heard on CW from 1200--1500h. GMT, and in the afternoon, the band is usually full of Russian stations, including some of the more rare districts. About 1600h., don't be surprised to hear some VU's from India! The most interesting period is that from 1800h. onwards, when "anything may happen". The 'phone merchants have their say about an hour later when W, PY, and VS, VK come in. You don't want to bother with the louder stations, but search in between them for likely signals. In the summer, the writer finds that the Pacific area is received well from 0500 - 0800h. (Sic)

The only way to receive DX is by careful listening - try to concentrate on the station received - and MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE COPIED THE CALL CORRECTLY!! Next month there will be some short notes on picking up calls in foreign languages.

Hon. Secretary's Notes

The future programme has now crystallised and will be as follows:-

August 15th: Telephone Exchange visit for those who missed the first one. Meet at H.Q. at 7 p.m. Remainder work on the gear etc.
August 22nd: Club Night on the air under auspices of Vice-Chairman.
August 29th: Joint Brains Trust with two consultants from the Wirral A.R.S.

Sept. 5th: Film "The Cathode oscillograph"

Sept. 12th: G2AMV Basil O'Brien "A practical approach to VFO design".

Sept. 19th: G2YS "Television interference and its cure".

As usual 90% of the club journal is the work of one contributor (not, I may add, the Hon. Sec.) The only way to end this somewhat unbalanced condition is for members to make the effort and turn out a small piece themselves. Don't let ignorance deter you; after all it never seems to worry the contributors to a certain better-printed bulletin and may provoke a spate of illuminating letters. We don't mind if you shelter behind an alias or "non-de-plume"; this very issue contains a letter from a distinguished authority concealed by the mysterious symbol "G. Toowyess". So, to pen-worthy colleagues otherwise I shall regrettfully have to write a piece myself.

Better Operating

When you tune over any amateur band you will always find at least one "lid", who, by his poor operating shows his ignorance. On 40 and 80m. you will hear someone breaking up a contact to speak to "an old friend" almost every time you listen. You hear the lids in a "net" talking about the "dogs" or the pub down the road.

No so serious are the lesser faults in the actual operating procedure. Some of the procedures are insisted on by the powers that be, while others are conventions, that is, procedures agreed upon by amateurs to facilitate the handling of messages. The basic operating procedures for 'phone and CW are not always identical. Anyway a contact can be divided into three definite parts:-

1. The call to the station.
2. The exchange of RST and other formalities.
3. The sign-off.

For this month let us content ourselves with some notes on telegraphy (posh for CW) operation. There is often some confusion about the use of AR, KN, K and SK.

AR - is sent at the end of a non-specific call to a station. i.e. GLAA GLAA GLAA do GLXX GLXX GLXX AR

KN - is sent at each over to a specific station, i.e. GLAA de GLXX KN. Therefore KN can mean over and others keep out.

K - over (used when there is no objection to others breaking in).

SK - used to signify positive end of contact, i.e. SK GLAA do GLXX GB K ----- SK GLXX do GLAA GB.

After a plain CQ call, you should send K and not AR K which, to quote, "dates back from Noah's houseboat". It has long been argued whether or not it is good operating to call CQ-DX, but if you do use it sign DX K. CL may be used to indicate that the station is closing down. Directional calls may be made, and are usually followed by KN.

CQ CHESTER CQ CHESTER CQ CHESTER

de GLAA GLAA GLAA KN

CQ CQ CQ VK de GLAA GLAA GLAA KN

When making directional calls, you should make them quite long. There is no golden rule about the length of calls they should be "just long enough". If activity is high on the band make the call very short, maybe 3Q's de and sign 3 times. It is not intended to say much about the

use of bk. It is popularly used to effect a quick over. Stations with facilities for break in working, i.e. they can receive in between the keying may send:

CQ BK CQBK CQBK de GLXX GLXX GLXX

This is repeated, until a station hearing the call presses down his key. GLXX hears this in between keying and stops sending or sends a "dit". The station calling then sends de GLAA bk. GLXX sends GLAA de GLXX R -- --- bk. Note that GLXX sends GLAA de GLXX in full to show those who may have called whom he is working. The authorities in this country insist that the call of station worked as well as your own call be sent at the beginning and end of each transmission.

Next month if there is sufficient interest there will be a similar article dealing with 'phone operation.

CQ-DX

July has provided some surprises for the DXer and there have been some quite good periods.

The appearance on 14mc. CW of LZIZ has caused some ripe comments. We shall see when and if cards come if he is genuine or not. The QSL's for FP8AC go to W6SAI who, operating FP8AC on St. Pierre Is., South of Newfoundland, packed a nice signal here with his 30 watts or so. If anyone has never heard Mexico, they may hear XE1AC around early in the morning. The writer's best stations for the month were: VU2CP at 18.23h. 568c.; LZIZ 1400h. 348c.; XE1AC 0543h. 'phone; HC1FG 0600-0800h. 'phone; VE8MB on Cornwallis Is. 0643h. 'phone; PK1HK at 18.22h. also 12.15h. 579 and 349 respectively. The two best were HE1JJ in the province of Liechenstein on 'phone and FP8AC who is mentioned above.

SLSBB is a Swedish army station. VP6CDI from Barbados may be heard every night at 2200h. working G6YQ of Walton, Liverpool on about 140008 k/cs. HASB is the HQ station of the Hungarian Amateur Radio League and uses 400w. operating 'phone and CW. Has anyone noticed the absence of ZS and VQ?

Well, chaps, we are not getting enough support, so if you have any news about amateur activities, or any bright ideas that haven't appeared in other magazines, send them along to me at the address given at the end or give me the dope in the club.

In General

Are there any club members interested in VHF? If so, we might start a VHF notes section.

The amplifier and quality merchants have been starved in the N/L so far. Well, there is only yourself to blame if you don't find anything interesting. Why not contribute something yourself to start the ball rolling? We would like an article on a small intercomm. amplifier for instance. If anyone has contributions, send them in to your respective Editor.

Amateur Activities, Rx.2 TX construction etc.

R.F. Editor, D. RICKERS, 97 RUABON ROAD, WREXHAM. (3 KNOCKS).

The librarians have asked us to announce the fact that the Library is available and that there are some very good books in it!

Correspondence

Dear "Distracted Mother",

I see from your letter that you are not aware that your Son's activities fulfil admirably the aim of Education today. We do not attempt to teach the child anything, but leave him alone to do as he likes. I feel you should be proud that your child has chosen such a promising field of activity. Let me reassure you with some examples: a study of the Wireless Telegraph Acts is what H.M. Inspectors call "history coming to life". Every amateur can point to Ryuku or Ifni on his map. With zone multipliers and contest scores to compute, his maths simply cannot fail. May I point out the valuable social training of the correct use of such well-turned phrases as "88 dr YL" or "The handle here is Egbert"? Complete this by a study of the art of the QSL card and the sweet music of AC4YN giving you "599" and what more could you want for a balanced education?

Yours, with 99's,
G. Toowyess.

P.S. Try a field day for some physical training.